

THE BUTTERFLY MAN

[117]

a proposition to become city salesman for an automobile concern, with hope beyond. His sisters, apparently in a mood to seek surcease from grief and desolation, had long since continued to find it, in a measure, by working all day long in the office of the County Recorder. The Avenue was very slow to see things.

Kate O'Brien loved Sedgewick, but she was not so dense as to overlook his faults, even though she loved him blindly. She realised better than any one else just what sort of a man he had been and what she would have to contend with. Somehow she had a feeling that, in time, she could refurbish him and teach him to live "according to his lights." He cared for her in a way; he cared as a beaten dog cares for the one whose hand is gentle and whose voice is soft. She had been his friend through all the years and she had not denied him by look or word. He caught himself dreaming of the future; he might be able to raise her to a social level equal to that of the dyspepsia-tablet maker's wife, who was, in a way, one of the recognised forces in society, although it was quite out of place for one to speak of the digestion in her presence. Perhaps, as he went upward in the automobile business — or, more likely, the flying machine industry — he might hope to polish her into a social brilliance such as even the wife of the omnibus company's president could not surpass nor the great-granddaughter of a Plymouth Rock merchant deny.

Kate was clever enough; all she lacked was the tone that he could give to her.